

Message Text

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UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 SOFIA 0468

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SUBJECT: CP - BILATERAL COMMUNICATION RELATIONSHIP FY 1979-80

REF: USIA 6048

1. SINCE WORLD WAR II BULGARIA HAS BEEN CLOSELY LINKED TO THE USSR IDEOLOGICALLY, POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY (CEMA), AND MILITARILY (WARSAW PACT). THE GOB CONSISTENTLY DEFENDS AND SUPPORTS SOVIET-INSPIRED POLICIES, PROFESSEDLY MOTIVATED BY CONCERNS FOR PEACE AND PEOPLE'S RIGHTS, AND CRITICIZES POLICIES OF WESTERN COUNTRIES, THE US IN PARTICULAR. THE COUNTRY IS TOTALLY COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED, ITS AGRICULTURE PREDOMINANTLY COLLECTIVIZED, COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY NATIONALIZED, AND ITS PEOPLE GENERALLY ISOLATED FROM THE WEST AND WESTERN THOUGHT. CONTROL OF SOURCES OF INFORMATION IS STRICT, AVAILABILITY OF WESTERN INFORMATION SEVERELY RESTRICTED, AND EMBASSY ACCESS TO BULGARIAN OFFICIALS LIMITED AND IN MANY CASES DENIED. THE US IS CONSIDERED THE MAJOR IDEOLOGICAL ENEMY OF SOCIALISM, AND BULGARIAN PROPAGANDA HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY ANTI-AMERICAN.

2. DECADES OF PRO-COMMUNIST INDOCTRINATION, ANTI-AMERICAN DISTORTIONS, DENIAL OF ACCESS TO WESTERN NEWS SOURCES, AND UNCLASSIFIED

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LIMITED PERSONAL COMMUNICATION HAVE RESULTED IN WIDESPREAD MISPERCEPTION OF US POLICIES AND SOCIETY. HOWEVER, THIS APPROACH HAS ALSO CREATED DISSATISFACTION AND HUNGER FOR CONTACT WITH AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE US. THERE IS A YEARNING FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS AND EXPANSION OF PERSONAL CONTACTS WITH AMERICANS. ACCORDINGLY, THE US SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES TO BROADEN INFORMATIONAL, EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND CULTURAL

INTERCHANGE WITH BULGARIANS TO MAKE US POLICIES AND SOCIETY BETTER UNDERSTOOD.

3. UNTIL RECENTLY US RELATIONS WITH BULGARIA HAVE BEEN POORER AND PERSONAL CONTACT MORE LIMITED THAN WITH ANY OF THE OTHER EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES (EXCEPT ALABANNA). HOWEVER, BILATERAL RELATIONS HAVE IMPROVED IN THE PAST FEW YEARS AND COMMUNICATION POSSIBILITIES WITH THEM. IN JUNE, 1977, THE FIRST AGREEMENT ON EXCHANGES AND COOPERATION IN CULTURAL, SCIENTIFIC, EDUCATIONAL, TECHNOLOGICAL, AND OTHER FIELDS WAS CONCLUDED. IN FEBRUARY, 1978, THE FIRST AGREEMENT ON SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN BULGARIA AND THE US WAS SIGNED, AS WAS A NEW AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND EXCHANGES BOARD (IREX) AND BULGARIA'S STATE COMMITTEE FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNICAL PROGRESS (SCSTP) FOR THE YEARS 1977-80. THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (NAS) AND THE BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (BAN) CONTINUE THEIR EXCHANGES PROGRAM UNDER A PREVIOUS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WHILE NEGOTIATING A NEW ONE.

4. THESE AGREEMENTS GIVE THE US SUBSTANTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIRECT, FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS AND ONE-ON-ONE COMMUNICATION IN ALL FIELDS. POSSIBILITIES INCLUDE CONFERENCES, SYMPOSIA, AND SEMINARS (TECHNICAL, SALES, LABOR, WITH EXHIBITIONS, AND THE FOREGOING AGREEMENTS). BULGARIAN OFFICIALS ARE RECEPTIVE TO THIS APPROACH AND A GRADUAL BUT STEADY EXPANSION SHOULD BE PURSUED. THE MOST PROMISING AREAS OF EFFECTIVE BILATERAL COMMUNICATION APPEAR TO BE UNCLASSIFIED

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IN EDUCATION, THE INTERNATIONAL VISITOR (IV) PROGRAM AND EXHIBITIONS, AS WELL AS IN SCIENTIFIC-TECHNOLOGICAL FIELDS. FOR EXAMPLE, DISCUSSIONS ARE UNDERWAY TO INCREASE FROM ONE TO TWO, THE NUMBER OF UNIVERSITY LECTURERS EACH WAY FOR THE NEXT ACADEMIC YEAR, AND CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO FURTHER INCREASES IN THE FUTURE INCLUDING DIRECT UNIVERSITY-TO-UNIVERSITY EXCHANGES OF FACULTY MEMBERS AND STUDENTS. THE LECTURER AT VELIKO TURNOVO UNIVERSITY UNDER THE SGE AXRIKNIN CONTINUES COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS, FACULTY, ADMINISTRATORS, AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

5. THE CURRENT SEVEN IVS SHOULD BE STEADILY INCREASED TO INCLUDE SENIOR AND YOUNG POLITICAL LEADERS DESPITE GOB PROPENSITY FOR "SCIENTIFIC" PERSONNEL. IVS TO DATE HAVE BROUGHT BACK HIGHLY FAVORABLE IMPRESSIONS FROM THE US. THE US HAS ONLY RECENTLY BEGUN TO PROGRAM AMERICAN SPECIALISTS IN BULGARIA. THESE CONSTITUTE AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF INFORMATION AND SHOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR LONGER PERIODS OF TIME. EXHIBITIONS REFLECT AMERICAN SOCIETY EFFECTIVELY AND PROVIDE A FORUM FOR PERSONAL DIALOGUE. THE AGENCY SHOULD ORGANIZE QUALITY EXHIBITS AND TAKE MAXIMUM ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES -- CITIES, MATERIALS, SEMINARS. IN ADDITION SPECIAL EXHIBITS SHOULD BE PROPOSED FROM TIME TO TIME, SUCH AS THE RECENTLY ACCEPTED DONABLE BOOK EXHIBIT. THE EMBASSY SHOULD CON-

TINUE WITH ITS VALUABLE NEWS AND THEMATIC WINDOW EXHIBITS. THE VOICE OF AMERICA BROADCASTS, ESPECIALLY IN THE BULGARIAN LANGUAGE, CONSTITUTE AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF NEWS AND REFLECTION OF AMERICAN THOUGHT AND INSTITUTIONS.

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6. BILATERAL ECONOMIC COMMUNICATION IS CHARACTERIZED BY GOB CORRECTNESS BUT CAUTION. THE GOB IS SECRETIVE WITH COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC INFORMATION, AND IS RELUCTANT TO COMMUNICATE OPENLY WITH WESTERNERS, INCLUDING EMBASSY OFFICERS. THIS POLICY IS NOT EXPECTED TO CHANGE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE US SHOULD CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE WITH A PAVILION AT THE ANNUAL PLOVDIV TRADE FAIR, WITH AGENCY PARTICIPATION IF POSSIBLE. USIS PARTICIPATED WITH POSITIVE RESULTS IN THE FAIR PRIOR TO 1977, BUT SINCE THEN HAS WITHDRAWN FOR BUDGETARY REASONS. WE FEEL THAT ICA CAN MAKE A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE EMBASSY'S COMMERCIAL EFFORT BY RESUMING PARTICIPATION IN THE PLOVDIV FAIR. VISITOR EXCHANGES, SEMINARS AND LECTURES ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE AND SHOULD BE EXPANDED.

7. US CULTURAL DIVERSITY IS NOT WELL DISPLAYED IN BULGARIA. SOME FILMS ARE SHOWN COMMERCIALLY BUT RELATIVELY FEW AMERICAN PERFORMING ARTISTS HAVE APPEARED IN BULGARIA, REFLECTING A GOB POLICY OF DENYING OR SEVERELY LIMITING EXPOSURE TO CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN MUSIC AND DANCE. PLANNING, LONGER LEAD TIME AND, IF REQUIRED, GREATER FINANCIAL SUPPORT WOULD ENSURE BETTER CHANCE OF BOOKINGS; POPULAR SUCCESS IS PREDICTABLE. OFFICIAL ENCOURAGEMENT SHOULD BE GIVEN TO AMERICANS TO PARTICIPATE IN VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL FESTIVALS (MUSIC, DANCE, FILM) HELD IN BULGARIA.

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8. THE LEAST SATISFACTORY PROSPECTS ARE IN THE MASS MEDIA -- BOTH IN THE EMBASSY'S PLACEMENT EFFORTS AND IN COUNTERING GOB ANTI-AMERICAN PROPAGANDA. THE POST DISTRIBUTES THE BULGARIAN-LANGUAGE QUARTERLY SPEKTUR AND ATTEMPTS TO DISSEMINATE OTHER PRINTED AND AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS TO THE MEDIA, OFFICIALS AND SPECIALISTS. THE GOB, WHICH RIGIDLY CONTROLS ALL MEDIA, GIVES A DISTORTED PICTURE OF THE US, RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS BY CLAIMING THAT BULGARIA IS INACCURATELY PORTRAYED IN THE US PRESS. POLICY GUIDANCE STEMS FROM THE HIGHEST OFFICIALS OF THE PARTY AND ANY FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN CONTENT COULD ONLY ORIGINATE WITH THEM. THUS, THERE IS NEED FOR HIGH-LEVEL BILATERAL DISCUSSION OVER MEDIA CONTENT ABOUT THE US, WHICH WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE BALANCED, AND MORE CONSISTENT WITH THE CSCE FINAL ACT AND WITH THE ZGOB'S PROFESSED DESIRE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE US.
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